



Testimony before the Michigan Senate Committee  
on Families, Seniors, and Human Services  
September 28, 2011

Good Afternoon,

My name is Ann Langford and I am Advocacy Specialist for the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, which serves older adults, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers in the southeast Michigan counties of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw. Thank you for allowing me to speak briefly on the topic of elder abuse and financial exploitation.

As you probably know, approximately 80,000 Michigan seniors fall victim to some form of abuse each year, physical, emotional, or financial. Seventy percent of abusers are "trusted" individuals including spouses, children, grandchildren and friends.

One example of this growing problem comes from an agency we provide support to: Oakland Family Services. According to Micheline Sommers who is their Director of Older Adult Services, they are seeing an increase in neglect and financial exploitation of their older clients. These older adults, who rely on their children to remain living independently, may not report their children to authorities out of fear they'll lose the little support and care that they do receive. Ms. Sommers related the case of a client who is unable to get out of the house, so her son goes grocery shopping for her. But he uses her Bridge card for his own purchases, and she is then left inadequate resources for the month. The son also finds where she hides her medications and takes her Xanax for himself. Her doctor now limits her prescription to a few pills at a time and asks her to hide them.

I have also brought with me today two letters from local organizations who wish to urge you to pass these bills. One is from the Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency's Senior Citizen Advisory Council, and the other is from the Monroe County Elder Justice Task Force.

The bills presented today can help these seniors who rely on others, their children, grandchildren, or hired caregivers to remain living independently and hold on to the life savings they've worked hard to accumulate. While some aging parents will not turn in their children or caregiver – no matter how severe the abuse or exploitation, we can take steps to protect them, and help them protect themselves. Again, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

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# SCAC

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September 20, 2011

*Dennis K. Griffin, Chairperson*

Michigan Senate Committee for Families, Seniors, and Human Services  
The Honorable Judy Emmons, Chairwoman  
The Honorable Tory Rocca  
The Honorable Mike Nofs  
The Honorable Vincent Gregory  
State Capitol  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 30014

## **RE: Elder Abuse bills**

Dear Senators:

The Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency's (OLHSA) Senior Citizen Advisory Council (SCAC) voted unanimously at its September 20, 2011 meeting to urge you to vote in support of the elder abuse protection and prevention bills that are currently before your committee.

For over 27 years, the SCAC, an advisory body to OLHSA's Board of Directors, has monitored issues and taken positions on policies which affect older adults. OLHSA is a private, non-profit Community Action Agency that has served the low-income, disabled and elderly residents of Oakland and Livingston counties since 1964. According to the 2010 U. S. Census, there are 263,223 residents in these two counties age 60 and above, growing 34% in ten years.

The incidence of elder abuse, physical, psychological and financial, has risen over the years and the Michigan legislature has, also over the years, introduced several bills to address this tragedy. However, none of the bills introduced in the Governor's Elder Abuse Task Force of 2006 have passed. It is time in 2011 to take action to signal to Michigan's residents that elder abuse and elder financial exploitation are crimes and must be prevented. Furthermore, if abuse or exploitation does occur, the consequences to perpetrators must be applied swiftly and with appropriate severity.

By voting to support the passage of these elder abuse bills, you vote to support the most vulnerable of Michigan's older adults – those who must trust and rely on others for their care and well-being.

Sincerely,

  
Dennis K. Griffin, Chair

**Monroe County Elder Justice Task Force**  
**15555 S. Telegraph Road, Suite 2**  
**Monroe, MI 48161**

September 26, 2011

Senator Judy Emmons, Chairwoman  
Senate Families, Seniors and Human Services Committee  
Room 210, Farnum Building  
Lansing, MI 48917

Dear Senator Emmons,

On behalf of the Monroe County Elder Justice Task Force, I write to strongly encourage the passage of Senate Bills 459, 454, 468 and 463 which promote the physical and financial welfare of our state's older adults. These bills will allow law enforcement officials and professionals the ability to help older adults face criminals perpetuating horrific crimes against them, both physically and financially.

Crimes against older adults are on the rise. Often as professionals, we find our hands tied to help prevent these crimes from happening due to the current systems in place. Referrals to Adult Protective Services have increased in gross proportions. Many of these complaints are filed against close family members, caregivers and powers of attorneys- persons that are extremely close to our older adults in our communities. Filing complaints against these persons is an extremely difficult decision for our older adults, but it needs to be done to show that Michigan has a "zero tolerance" attitude about crimes against its older citizens.

Poor economy in Michigan is driving the increase in crimes against older adults. In Monroe County, we have witnessed cases where older adults have been threatened and abused for whatever funds they have. Cases, where their funds have been embezzled by close relation, hostile home invasions and theft. These crimes have to stop. This legislation lays a foundation of protection and support for our older adults to fight back against these criminals.

We strongly urge you to support these bills on behalf of every older adult in Michigan. They are counting on you to be tough on elder abuse and all crimes against the elderly!

Sincerely,

*Terri L. Hamad*

Terri L. Hamad, Chairwoman

CC: Senator Randy Richardville